

Written Testimony
Frank Hagaman, Executive Director
Hartford Preservation Alliance
SB 946, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget
Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee
Monday, March 9, 2015

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger my name is Frank Hagaman, I'm the Executive Director of the Hartford Preservation Alliance. Thank you for allowing me to have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Basic Operating Support (BOS) for historic preservation offered to organizations such as the Hartford Preservation Alliance through Community Investment Act. Conceived as financial support for organizations in the State these critical funds have allowed us to staff historic preservation work in cities and towns where funding does not exist. With perhaps the richest fabric of historic buildings in the country the effort to protect and preserve these assets goes largely without sufficient operating funds. Relying mostly on individual donations or volunteers we are doing the work to protect historic assets thus assuring the quality of life in Connecticut. In 2015 preservation does much more in terms of community economic development. I offer two examples in Hartford:

1. Hartford Preservation Alliance has become a trusted resource to the Department of Development for the City of Hartford. We now provide technical assistance to about 5,300 properties which are either designated as historic or are located within an historic district. Our purpose is to offer cost-effective advice on renovation or preservation projects. Our aim is to sustain properties, improve neighborhoods and to grow the tax base. Skilled construction workers are critical to historic preservation. We also are dedicated to creating jobs. Further Hartford is the first city to enact an Historic Commission. Our technical assistance has provided both petitioners and commissioners the resource to improve communication and make the process of gaining permits far easier. The BOS funds have enabled us to provide free technical assistance to property owners, many of whom are low and moderate income residents. Without these funds a key resource would not be available.
2. The Preservation Alliance has organized a Comprehensive Community Plan discussion for the Farmington Avenue Corridor located between Sigourney Street and Woodland Avenue in the Asylum Hill Neighborhood. It is to be a cultural discussion of how to improve the street and to reuse vacant and abandoned historic buildings. Most people would identify with the long-closed Comet Diner on the corner of Laurel and Farmington. However the farthest end of the corridor is dominated by the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center and the Mark Twain House. These international icons are visited constantly. We want to carry out a comprehensive plan to expand the cultural activities and create a profound sense of place. By doing so we hope to make a destination to bring residents and visitors who want to come, study and stay. It is through the Basic Operating Support funding that Hartford Preservation Alliance has been able to organize and focus the amazing collaboration of community assets, companies, residents around an urban economic revitalization plan in Hartford. A model which can be replicated around the State. Leveraging that brings vitality and prosperity to a community.

Please give careful consideration to the importance of funding this community revitalization work not only here in Hartford but elsewhere throughout the State. Thank You